



For Immediate Release

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Friday, July 20, 2007

***SENATE TAKES FIRST STEP TO MAKE COLLEGE MORE  
ACCESSIBLE, ENZI SAYS;  
URGES FURTHER ACTION ON KEY HIGHER EDUCATION  
REFORMS***

**Washington, D.C.** - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today said the Senate has taken the first step toward making college more affordable with passage of the Higher Education Reconciliation Act early today, but warned that more action is needed to expand access to college, protect students from bad actors in the student loan industry, and provide students with clear information they need to understand and manage their debts.

The Senate approved the Higher Education Reconciliation Act by a vote of 78 to 18.

“The cost of college has risen dramatically, and at the same time the need for a college education has never been greater,” Enzi said. “It is our responsibility to ensure that the investment our students and families make in terms of time and money is a good one, and that they are confident there will be financial aid to assist them.”

“Providing additional need-based grant aid is a critical component of increasing access and affordability. I am pleased that this bill does this by increasing Pell grants, and by expanding the ability of working students to receive Pell grants. This is critically important as the student population in our colleges becomes less and less traditional.”

The Committee’s reconciliation package includes tradeoffs between loan programs and need-based aid that will help address the challenges of the rising costs of post-secondary education while saving about \$1 billion for deficit reduction. The bill raises the authorized level for a maximum federal Pell grant award for low income students to \$5,400 for academic year 2008-09, with additional increases through 2012.

Enzi said he is pleased that the Senate will consider the Higher Education Amendments of 2007, S. 1642, next week. That bill will restore students’ trust in student loan programs by holding lenders and schools to a code of conduct, ensuring that the

agreements between lenders and universities work to serve the best interests of students. It will also ensure that students and parents have the information they need about the costs of college and the financial impact of their loans so they can make sound decisions about their futures.

“This is the second time in as many Congresses we have been on the brink of systemic reform of federal higher education programs,” Enzi said. “I do not want to squander yet another opportunity to make these programs more efficient as well as more effective. Our challenge is not only to improve access to higher education but to ensure that the quality of our system of higher education is not compromised.”

“We need to enact both pieces of legislation because America’s students must have all the tools they need to complete higher education and to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to become competitive in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.”

Enzi said that key provisions of S. 1642 include:

- Providing consumer friendly, easy to access and understand, detailed information about college tuition and fees;
- Calling for the Department of Education and IRS to coordinate and automate the FAFSA process;
- Requiring the Department of Education to establish protocols for limiting and restoring access to the National Student Loan Data System, a database that contains personal financial information about student borrowers and their families and is used by students, schools, lenders, and guarantee agencies;
- Requiring colleges to establish Codes of Conduct to prohibit their financial aid employees from receiving anything of value in exchange for advantages sought by lenders; and,
- Expanding prohibitions on guaranty agencies and lenders that restrict the offering of any premiums, payments, prizes, and tuition payments.

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